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Education

# Breaking Down “The Triangle of Self-Obsession” — 10 Understanding Steps

Marcel Ray Duriez 5 min read · May 20, 2026

The Triangle of Self-Obsession

# THE TRIANGLE OF SELF-OBSESSION

UNDERSTANDING THE CYCLE. BREAKING THE CYCLE. GROWING BEYOND THE CYCLE.

## THE CORE IDEA

When we are born, we are conscious only of ourselves. As we grow, we should learn that we are part of a larger world, and that people, places, and things cannot provide all of our wants and needs.

When we fail to grow emotionally, we become self-obsessed—living inside our wants, fears, anger, and resentments. This creates a cycle of pain that can lead to addiction and emotional misery.

*We cannot control everything.*

*We must learn to accept, let go, and grow.*

## RESENTMENT

PAST

Living in the past.
Replaying hurts.
Holding grudges.
It keeps us stuck in yesterday.

## THE TRIANGLE OF SELF-OBSESSION

These three emotions feed each other and keep us trapped in self.

## ANGER

PRESENT

Fighting the present.
Resisting reality.
Reacting with emotion.
It keeps us from peace today.

## FEAR

FUTURE

Worrying about the future.
Imagining the worst.
Creating anxiety.
It steals our peace for tomorrow.

## SELF-OBSESSION

When resentment, anger, and fear become the center of our lives, we become self-obsessed. We think only about our pain, our needs, our problems.

This emotional self-centeredness keeps us from connection, perspective, and spiritual growth.

*Freedom begins when we stop living inside our pain.*

## WHY IT KEEPS US TRAPPED

### EMOTIONAL IMMATURITY

Addiction keeps us from growing up emotionally. We act like children—expecting the world to meet all our needs.

### UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

We expect too much from people, places, and things. When life doesn’t match our expectations, we suffer.

### DEPENDENCE OUTSIDE OURSELVES

We look outside ourselves for comfort, validation, escape, or identity. Substances become a way to survive.

### EMOTIONAL REACTIONS

We react instead of respond. Our defects of character are powered by emotional reaction, not rational thinking.

### THE CYCLE CONTINUES

Resentment fuels anger. Anger fuels fear. Fear fuels more resentment. The cycle repeats until we change.

## THE SOLUTION: GROWTH, ACCEPTANCE, AND ACTION

### 1. AWARENESS

Recognize the triangle. Notice your thoughts, emotions, and patterns.

### 2. ACCEPTANCE

Accept reality as it is. We cannot change what we refuse to accept.

### 3. SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Connect with a Higher Power. Build faith, hope, and inner strength.

### 4. SUPPORT

Use the support of others. We don’t have to do this alone.

### 5. THE 12 STEPS

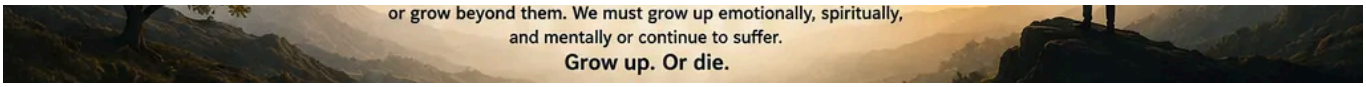
Work the Steps daily. They give us tools for emotional and spiritual freedom.

### 6. ACTION

Practice these principles in all our affairs. Keep growing.

## THE GOAL: FREEDOM FROM THE TRIANGLE

We have a choice: live trapped in resentment, anger, and fear—




An Essay on Marcel’s Understanding

“The Triangle of Self-Obsession” is not simply about addiction. It is about the human mind becoming trapped inside itself. In my understanding, the pamphlet is describing the psychological prison that forms when resentment, anger, and fear begin controlling perception, identity, and emotional reactions. Addiction may be the visible symptom, but the deeper issue is internal imbalance. A person stops living life and instead begins emotionally orbiting pain, memory, control, and survival.

The pamphlet begins with childhood consciousness. A child naturally sees themselves as the center of existence because their needs must be met by others. Over time, healthy growth teaches acceptance, patience, self-regulation, emotional responsibility, and independence. However, addiction interrupts this developmental process. Many addicts become emotionally frozen in survival mode. They continue searching outside themselves for relief, validation, comfort, escape, or completion. Substances become emotional substitutes for maturity, peace, identity, and stability.

The triangle itself is psychologically powerful because each point represents a different time dimension of suffering. Resentment lives in the past. Anger fights the present. Fear controls the future. Together, they consume the mind completely. A person trapped in resentment continually replays wounds, betrayals, humiliations, or injustices. A person trapped in anger fights reality itself, becoming hostile toward situations, people, limitations, or unmet expectations. Fear then projects disaster into the future, creating anxiety, insecurity, paranoia, and emotional exhaustion. The mind becomes stretched across yesterday, today, and tomorrow, leaving almost no peace in the present moment.

In my understanding, self-obsession is deeper than selfishness. It is hyper-focus on the self through emotional suffering. Even self-hatred can become a form of self-obsession because the mind never leaves itself long enough to experience peace, gratitude, connection, or perspective. Addiction amplifies this condition because substances temporarily silence emotional pain while secretly strengthening it underneath. The person becomes caught in a cycle where the escape becomes the prison.

The most important message in the reading is the idea of emotional and spiritual growth. Recovery is not only about stopping substances. Recovery is learning how to live differently. It is learning how to tolerate discomfort without destruction, disappointment without collapse, fear without panic, and pain without escape. The Twelve Steps are presented not simply as rules, but as tools for restructuring perception, behavior, humility, accountability, and acceptance.

The pamphlet also explains that people, places, and things cannot permanently fill internal emptiness. This is one of the hardest truths in recovery. Many individuals spend years believing happiness will arrive through relationships, money, attention, substances, achievement, or control. Yet internal emptiness follows them because the issue is not external absence — it is internal disconnection. Recovery begins when a person stops demanding that the world remove all discomfort and instead begins developing emotional strength within themselves.

In my understanding, the final line — “grow up or die or try to stay alive,” — is not meant as cruelty. It is a statement about emotional evolution. Addiction destroys people because it prevents growth. Recovery demands transformation. A person must move from reaction to reflection, from blame to accountability, from emotional chaos to emotional understanding.

Breaking the triangle of self-obsession means learning how to live outside constant resentment, anger, and fear. It means becoming mentally present, emotionally aware, spiritually grounded, and connected to something greater than immediate emotional impulses.

Ultimately, “The Triangle of Self-Obsession” is a map of addiction psychology, but it is also a map of human suffering itself. It explains how the mind becomes trapped in cycles of pain and how recovery becomes the process of reclaiming balance, maturity, acceptance, and peace.

**1. Understand the Core Idea**

The reading explains that addiction and emotional suffering often come from becoming trapped inside ourselves — our wants, fears, anger, and resentments become the center of everything.

**2. Learn the Three Points of the Triangle**

The triangle is made of:

- **Resentment** = living in the past
- **Anger** = fighting the present
- **Fear** = worrying about the future

These three emotions feed each other.

**3. Recognize Self-Obsession**

Self-obsession does not always mean arrogance or selfishness.
It can mean:

- overthinking ourselves,
- replaying pain,
- needing control,
- expecting others to fix our emotions,
- or constantly living inside emotional reactions.

### 4. Notice Childhood Thinking

The reading explains that children naturally believe the world should meet all their needs.
Growth happens when people learn:

- responsibility,
- acceptance,
- patience,
- emotional maturity,
- and independence.

Addiction often keeps people emotionally stuck.

### 5. Connect Addiction to Emotional Dependence

Many people in addiction look outside themselves for:

- comfort,
- validation,
- escape,
- identity,
- or peace.

Substances become emotional survival tools.

### 6. Identify Unrealistic Expectations

The pamphlet teaches that suffering increases when we demand:

- people behave perfectly,
- life be fair,
- emotions disappear,
- or reality match our expectations.

Recovery begins with acceptance.

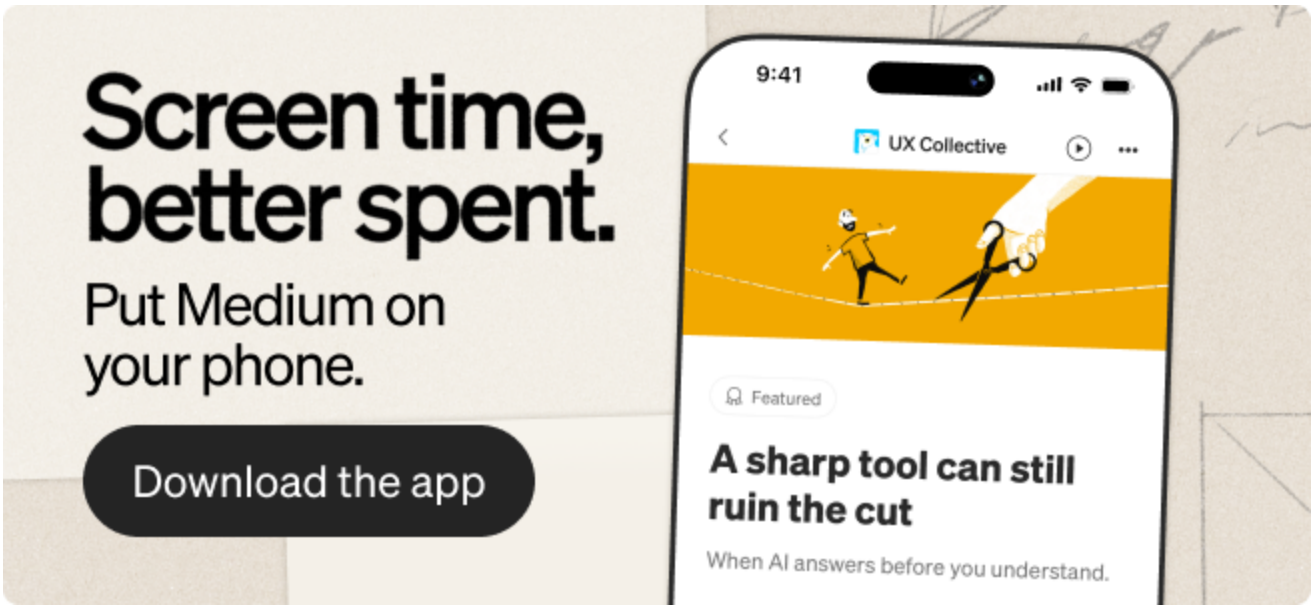
### 7. Separate the Past, Present, and Future

A major lesson:

- Resentment traps us in yesterday.
- Anger fights today.
- Fear controls tomorrow.

Healing happens by learning to live in the moment.

### 8. Understand Emotional Reactions




The reading says many defects of character come from emotional reactions rather than calm thinking.
Recovery teaches people to pause instead of react automatically.

### 9. Learn the Recovery Solution

The pamphlet says the solution includes:

- spiritual growth,
- honesty,
- accountability,
- community,
- the Twelve Steps,
- and practicing principles daily.

The goal is freedom from self-obsession.

### 10. Understand the Final Message

The final line means emotional growth is necessary for survival. Recovery is not only stopping substances — it is growing emotionally, mentally, and spiritually.

### 10 Journaling Prompts for Group Understanding

**1.**

What resentment from my past still controls my emotions today?

**2.**

When I become angry, what expectations usually are not being met?

**3.**

What fears about the future keep me from feeling peaceful?

**4.**

How do I react when life does not go the way I want?

**5.**

What situations make me become emotionally self-centered or obsessive?

**6.**

Have I ever expected people, relationships, or substances to fill emptiness inside me?

**7.**

What does emotional maturity mean to me today?

**8.**

What are healthy ways I can respond instead of reacting with resentment, anger, or fear?

**9.**

How has addiction affected my ability to accept reality?

**10.**

What would freedom from self-obsession look like in my daily life?

**Group Understanding Discussion Topics**

**Emotional Triangle Exercise**

Have each participant draw a triangle:

- One corner = resentment

- One corner = anger
- One corner = fear

Then ask:

- Which corner do you live in the most?
- Which one causes the most damage?
- Which one is hardest to admit?

### Group Reflection Questions

- How does addiction keep people emotionally immature?
- Why is acceptance difficult?
- Can fear create anger?
- Can resentment become addiction fuel?
- What does “growing up emotionally” mean in recovery?

### Closing Understanding

This reading teaches that addiction is not only physical.
It affects the mind, emotions, reactions, relationships, and spiritual life. The “triangle” becomes a cycle:

- pain,
- reaction,
- obsession,

- escape,
- repeat.

Recovery teaches people how to break that cycle through awareness, honesty, acceptance, support, and emotional growth.

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**Written by Marcel Ray Duriez**

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